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3rd June 2005

The European Patent Office  
Erhardtstrasse 27  
D-80298 Munich  
Germany

Dear Sirs

Re: PCT Patent Application No. PCT/GB2004/050037  
(Filed 9th December 2004)  
claiming priority from  
UK Patent Application No. 03 28603.6  
(Filed 10th December 2003)  
Applicant: Middlesex Silver Co. Limited  
Inventor: Johns, P. J.  
"Silver Chain Manufacture"  
Case: MDX,008-PCT

In response to the Written Opinion of the International Searching Authority, we file herewith new pages 11 and 14.

The ISA has objected to claims 1 and 28 which are unclear due to the use of the word "about" to qualify the range for germanium content.

In response to this objection, the word "about" does not now appear in claims 1 and 28.

D1 is already referred to in the specification of the present application and discloses a solder-filled wire for use in chain making, wherein the wire is of silver-cadmium alloy. The purpose of the cadmium is to increase the melting point of the alloy and there is no disclosure or suggestion that any beneficial results are obtained without cadmium present.

D2 is an earlier published specification of the present inventor and discloses that silver/copper/germanium/boron alloys can be joined by both resistance welding and laser welding. This falls considerably short of disclosing that a present germanium-containing alloys are suitable for laser welding during chain making, especially having regard to the particular difficulties in making chain that are discussed at some length in the introduction to the present specification.

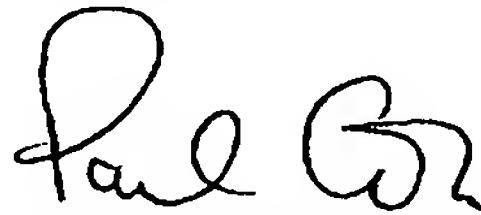
contn:-

Even if the Examiner's premise is accepted that the disclosure of D1 and D2 can be read together, it would not have been clear to a skilled person without hindsight that the present alloys would in fact be suitable for laser-welding to make a chain. Even if it were obvious to try laser-welding (which is not conceded owing to the difficulties of this particular technology), then there was no reasonable expectation of success as opposed, perhaps, to a vague hope of success which as is well known is not sufficient for an obviousness objection.

We look forward to receiving the results of the further examination of this application. Should there be any minor matter which requires attention the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned.

Would you please return the attached copy of this letter to acknowledge safe receipt hereof.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Paul Cole". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Paul" and the last name "Cole" clearly distinguishable.

Paul Cole/kep  
Chartered Patent Agent  
European Patent Attorney  
Authorised Representative

Enc: New pgs 11&13

## CLAIMS

1. A method of making silver chain which comprises forming lengths of silver  
5 wire into successive chain links whose ends abut, and closing the links by brazing or  
welding abutting ends thereof by means of a laser, wherein the wire comprises at  
least 92.5 wt % Ag and 0.5 - 3 wt % Ge.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the wire is of diameter 0.008 – 0.20 cm  
10 (0.003-0.08 inches).
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the wire is of diameter 0.013-0.08 cm  
(0.005-0.030 inches).
- 15 4. The method of any preceding claim, wherein the composition of the wire in  
cross section is constant.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein the wire is of a ternary Ag-Cu-Ge alloy  
containing at least 92.5 wt% Ag, 0.5-3 wt% Ge, elemental boron as a grain refiner at  
20 a concentration of 1-40 ppm and the balance, apart from incidental ingredients and/or  
impurities, copper.
6. The method of claim 4, wherein the wire is of a ternary Ag-Cu-Ge alloy  
comprising, apart from incidental ingredients and impurities, not less than 92.5 wt%  
25 Ag, about 6.3 wt % Cu, about 1.2 wt % Ge, and about 4-8 ppm elemental B.
7. The method of claim 4, wherein the wire is of a ternary Ag-Cu-Ge alloy  
containing more than 93.5 wt% to 95.5 wt% Ag, from 0.5 to 3 wt% Ge, 1-40 ppm  
elemental boron and the remainder, apart from incidental ingredients and/or  
30 impurities, copper.

27. The method of claim 25, wherein the atmosphere has a dew point in the range from +2°C to +50°C.
- 5 28. A silver chain which comprises lengths of silver wire formed into successive links whose ends abut and are closed by brazed or welded joints, wherein the wire comprises at least 92.5 wt% Ag and 0.5 - 3 wt % Ge.